

*Swan Lake, NY* - Bob Franklin is a small family farmer in Swan Lake, New York who bottles his own milk and produces other agricultural products for sale in local and regional markets. With large, corporate-run agribusinesses dominating today's agricultural marketplace, it's a story that's becoming less and less common in Sullivan County as Upstate's small farming community struggles to hang on. Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) visited the farm today to learn about the unique products that Bob is offering and discuss ways in which federal policy can help boost small farmers and make it easier to raise a family on a farm-based income.

"Small family farmers work harder than anybody," said Hinchey. "It's not just about raising livestock and crops, but more and more often it's also about running a small business designed to add value to agricultural products and move them to markets. Bob Franklin is a perfect example. His operation is entrepreneurial and successful, and it's something I think we can help encourage. Sullivan County has always had a strong farming community, and I hope to learn more about what we can do to help it grow and prosper."

As Congress begins debate over the next Farm Bill, Hinchey says there are several provisions that can be included to help area farmers, including provisions to provide better access to capital and address the dairy crisis. Hinchey also expressed his support for efforts to obtain a U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Business Enterprise Grant that would help build a small dairy processing facility for Sullivan County dairy farmers. Today's visit, however, was an opportunity to listen and learn about an innovative approach that's already proven successful.

Hinchey also discussed a few actions he's taken already. He helped secure an \$800,000 federal investment to allow for the construction of the Southern Catskills Red Meat Processing Facility to reduce the wait and travel time Catskill livestock farmers faced when processing their livestock. Hinchey was also instrumental in obtaining and extending the REAP designation for Sullivan County, one of only five areas around the country that has access to priority grants and loans from the United States Department of Agriculture.

In the nearby Hudson Valley, Hinchey also secured \$350,000 in federal funding for the Hudson Valley Agribusiness Development Corporation which used the funding for the Farm to Table initiative. Farm to Table is a centralized co-packing facility that provides access to expensive equipment that most farmers cannot afford. The program is lowering production costs for Hudson Valley farmers and connecting them to the growing demand for locally produced agricultural products in New York City. It has already created over new 20 jobs at its facility and is supporting scores of farm operations around the region.